

PASTORAL LETTER

OF

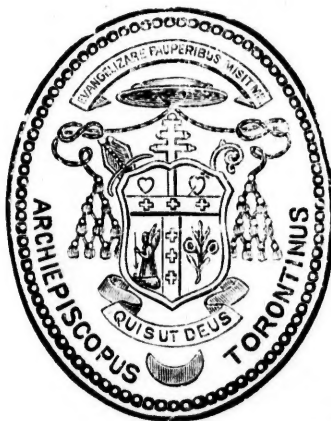
His Grace the Archbishop of Toronto,

ON THE

CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS

AT

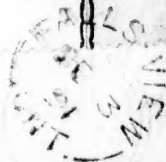
NIAGARA * FALLS.



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This Contains an Interesting Account of Niagara Falls,

Ontario, Canada.



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PASTORAL LETTER
OF
HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF TORONTO,
ON THE
CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS AT NIAGARA FALLS.

JOHN JOSEPH LYNCH, by the Grace of God and the Appointment of the Holy See, Archbishop of Toronto, Assistant at the Pontifical Throne, &c., &c.

To the Venerable Clergy, Religious Communities, and Beloved Laity of Our Diocese, Salvation and Peace from Our Lord.

The Cataract of Niagara yearly attracts thousands of lovers of sublimity and grandeur. They come to wonder, but few, alas, to pray. The place has been to us from childhood an object of the greatest interest. A picture of it fell into our hands—we were awe-struck with its beauty, and wished that we could adore God there. The vision of it haunted us through life. The providence of God at length conducted us to it, and almost miraculously provided the means of commencing near it the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels in the diocese of Buffalo, N.Y. On our being appointed by the Holy See Bishop of Toronto, it was our first care to secure on the Canada side of Niagara Falls a large tract of land on which to erect religious establishments, where God would be worshipped with a perfect homage of sacrifice and praise, and where the Catholic Church would be fittingly represented.

It was at the commencement of the American civil war. Our heart was moved with sorrow at the loss of many lives and the prospect of so many souls going before God in judgment, some, it is to be feared, but ill prepared. The beautiful rainbow that spanned the Cataract, the sign of peace between God and the sinner, suggested prayers and hopes to see the war soon ended; and we called the Church "Our Lady of Victories or of Peace." A Convent was soon erected on the grounds, and Nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, called of Loretto, were installed.

This Order had its heroic beginnings in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth of England. Ladies of noble birth fled to Bavaria to avoid death or the loss of religious rights in their own country. They formed a Religious Community approved of by Clement XI., re-entered England towards the close of the last century, and subsequently came to Toronto on the invitation of its first Bishop, the venerable and saintly Dr. Power.

These good Nuns, whilst not engaged in imparting a higher education to young ladies who assemble at the Convent from all parts of the country, occupy their time in adoring God and contemplating His overflowing sweetness and bounty in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Their chapel windows overlook the grandest scene in the world, and holy thoughts and prayer arise to heaven as the spray ascends to form clouds that fertilize the earth with refreshing showers. The Convent chapel is dedicated to the Most Blessed Sacrament, in hopes that when the Community will be sufficiently numerous it may keep up a perpetual adoration.

We have for many years searched for a fervent congregation of men to found a Monastery and a church worthy of the place and its destination. Enthusiastic pilgrims of nature's grandeur come here to enjoy its beauty; others, alas, to chrown remorse. We desired to have a religious house where those pilgrims would be attracted to adore nature's God in spirit and in truth, and who would there find, in solitude and rest, how great and good God is.

The Fathers of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the most ancient in the Church and dear to the heart of our Blessed Mother, have commenced this good work. Our Holy Father Pius IX. has been graciously pleased to confer upon the present little church Plenary Indulgences and other favors granted to the most ancient pilgrimages of the old world. The Fathers also propose, when a suitable house is built, to receive Prelates and Clergy of the Church as well as Laity to make retreats; and to provide Priests, worn out in the service of their Divine Master, with a home where they can quietly prepare for eternity.

Missions will be also given in parishes by the Religious at the request of the Bishops. A place more fitting for such an Institution could hardly be found. God Himself has made the selection. It is easy of approach from all parts of the country, and on the confines of two great nations. We have full confidence that God will finish His own good work by inspiring the hearts that love Him, and His Blessed Mother of Mount Carmel, to contribute to the erection of a Church and Monastery there. Those pious souls will lay up for themselves treasures in the bosom of God, from which they will draw in their great need, when about to balance their accounts before His judgment seat.

Let us accompany the Christian soul in his religious pilgrimage at Niagara Falls. At first sight he will be overawed by its grandeur and stunned by its thun-

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der : recovering, he will raise his heart to the God that created it, and will presently sink down into the depths of his own nothingness. For a while he is completely absorbed, as if entranced : after a time, he gains on himself, and cries out, "*Domine Deus, exultet*." "O Lord, O Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth." To speak now is irksome to him. His whole soul is filled with God : he wants to be alone. Tears, with an irresistible force, will relieve his heart, and he shall soon exclaim : "What, O Lord, is man, that thou art mindful of him ; or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him."

He looks upon that broad, deep and turbulent volume of water, dashing over a precipice about one hundred and sixty feet in height, and two thousand eight hundred feet in its whole span, with a thunder echoed from the lake below with its mountain banks, and thinks of the awful power of Him who speaks in the "voice of many waters," and of his own last leap into eternity. In hope he raises his eyes and sees faintly a ceding clouds formed from the spray, bridged in the centre by a beautiful rainbow. Again he cries out : "Let my prayer ascend as incense in thy sight. Let my last sigh be one of love, after making my peace with God and the world."

The water, as it sweeps over the Falls, sinks deeply by its weight and momentum, and after gurgling, seething and foaming, rises again to the surface. One is reminded of that purification which takes place after death, and the troubles and agonies of the pure soul in the process of purification, to be cleansed before its rising to enjoy the brightness and glory of God's sweet countenance.

The water of the lake below has also its warning lesson. It is solemn and still as death after a busy and turbulent life. Death holds many a deep secret of a good or an ill spent life. He is aroused from his reverie by the shriek and noise of an engine, as it whirls on by the banks above, with its string of cars filled with the fashionable and the gay, some intent on pleasure, others on grief.

"O," he may say, "poor mortals, how long will you hunt after vanity and be in love with lies. In a few years you will be all gone, and what will be the fate of your immortal souls for all eternity." Let us return with the pilgrim to the Monastery, and rest a little, and from the windows of his temporary cell contemplate the rapids above the Falls. It is morning. At the horizon, where the waters and the clouds appear to meet, all is calm and tranquil. Soon the river contracts, and peacefully running for a while, it meets with ledges of rock, and, dashing itself into foam and whirling eddies, forms hundreds of small waterfalls, which, catching the rays of the morning sun, appear as so many white-capped billows of the sea after a storm. Joy and gladness are typified in those sparkling waves. Occasionally tiny rainbows may be seen enamelling the brows of those miniature cataracts : and as innumerable bubbles fall, pearls and jewels are reflected in prismatic colors in the foam. In these are seen emblems of the morning of life, when candour, humility and loveliness portray the innocence of a happy soul basking in the sunshine of God's love.

Everything now is gay and joyful, and bright with hopes of wealth and pleasure, and a long and happy life. The world presents itself in all those gorgeous colors that dazzle the imagination : but the time shall come when disappointments, sorrows and sickness will overtake him ; a troubled and stormy life may be his lot : and he shall be, when the soul shall tremble on the precipice of eternity, awaiting to be

ushered into the presence of his Maker. Then indeed will the pleasures and honors of the world appear as mere mockeries, and sacrifices for Christ the only treasures worthy of man's toil.

A day will arrive when this beauty will be changed. The unheeding Christian dwells on hopes of grandeur and wealth, and hurries from pleasure to pleasure, until at length the soul, writhing in remorse, is launched into an unhappy eternity, from which there is no returning.

On rainy days a great gloom comes over the whole scenery at the Falls. The atmosphere is gloomy and the clouds heavier here than elsewhere: the roar of the Cataract, striking against the condensed atmosphere, becomes like continuous distant thunders. The mind is wrapt in a gloom melancholy, and is brought to think of that pall of death which hangs over every one, the sinner and the saint. If a clap of thunder and a flash of lightning should add their terrors to the scene, the soul must be forcibly reminded of that awful day of judgment, and of the assembled children of Adam in the valley of Josaphat, and of the questions: "What hast thou done with thy own soul, and where is thy brother?" What hast thou done with mercy graces that I have given to thee, and where are the souls that thou hast scandalized and ruined both by word and example?" When night comes on the soul is wrapped, as it were, in its own wintry shroud, and longs for some secure repose. How sweet and consoling it will be in those days of gloom to retire to the chapel of Our Lady of Peace, where the heart, though oppressed with sadness, yet raises itself up to God in hope for mercy, and cries for pardon and grace through the intercession of His Blessed Mother.

In the midst of the rapids are seen small islands covered with cedar and balsam trees sitting quietly in the sunshine, the waves dashing around them. The pilgrim may be reminded here of the soul strong in the grace of God and calm in the midst of the troubles of the world: and yet "In a flood of many waters they shall not come nigh unto him." (Psalm xxxi.)

How many hearts, after having discharged their load of sin and sorrow in the tribunal of Penance, will look upon these islands of peace, and that rainbow of hope, and on the glorious scene around with eyes filled with tears of gratitude, welling up from a humble and contrite heart. He will bless his merciful God, who, notwithstanding his many crimes, has put around him the robe of innocence, and on his finger the ring that should remind him of a father's love and of a son's gratitude and fidelity. Joy and hope will renew his youth. In this holy retreat of Niagara Falls many will find the road to heaven, and the true pleasure of serving God, and the real joy of having escaped the terrors of the world to come.

In winter time, also, the pilgrim will be taught sublime lessons. The trees and shrubs around are covered with ice, and myriads of glassy pendants hang from the branches, reflecting in dazzling brightness the rays of the sun, and by night those of the moon. May he not consider a soul encircled by the beauty of God's graces, purchased for Him through the blood of Christ. He will hear a crash. It is a branch of a tree that breaks down under its weight of icicles. Alas! how many souls break away from God, though highly favored with His special graces, and are never again engrafted on the vine that is Christ. Again, may it not remind him of the death of the young, the beautiful, and the high-born, snatched away from the caresses of friends, the splendors of fortune, and laid low in the grave. The lunar bow

by night will give him hopes that in the darkest hour of sin and sorrow God's mercy-seat is always approachable.

The Cataract of Niagara has been well called "nature's high altar." The water, as it descends in white foam, the altar-dloth; the spray, the incense; the rainbow, the lights on the altar. One must cry out: "Great is the Lord and admirable are his works. How great is thy name through the whole world. Let us adore and love him with our whole hearts and our whole souls."

As the pilgrim passes over one of the bridges that span the islands, he will see torrents of water rushing madly as it were from the clouds, the only background to be seen; and he is reminded of the cataracts of heaven opened, and the earth drowned on account of sin. Here the soul, overawed with terror, might exclaim: "Come; let us hide in the clefts of the rocks, in the wounds of Jesus Christ, from the face of an angry God."

New beauties are constantly discovering themselves at Niagara. The eye, wandering from beauty to beauty, compels the soul to salute its Maker, "As always ancient and always new."

The pilgrim may cast his mind back a few centuries, and consider the Indians, encamped around the Falls, telling the simple tales about the creation of the world, and adoring God in the twilight of their intelligences, in the best manner they could; and he might vividly portray the whole tribe preparing the most beautiful virgin for sacrifice. She is dressed in white and placed in a white canoe, the father and mother, sister and friends, bidding their last adious and wetting her cheeks with tears as they placed her in the frail bark and shoved it off on the edge of the great precipice, that she might be a sacrifice of propitiation and sweet pleasure to the Great Spirit, to obtain pardon for the sins of her tribe, and good hunting. What sublime reflections will the recollection of this awful ceremony bring up.

God is great and powerful and just; but He is appeased with a Sacrifice. "An humble and contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise." The poor Indians must have heard of the great sacrifice which God always demanded as an acknowledgment of His sovereign dominion over the whole world, and of the sacrifices which he exacts on account of sin. Perhaps they heard of the great sacrifices of Adam and of Noah, Isaac and Jacob, and of the sacrifice of the Adorable Son of God. In their simple ignorance they wished to sacrifice something themselves; the young, pure and handsome virgin is their greatest treasure. She is sacrificed. She is sent over the Falls. They are all now dead and have gone to the Great Spirit, whom they stroy to worship, and in the language of David appeal to Him to remember not their ignorance nor their sins: "Recollect not, O God, our ignorance." May not the Christian soul here say to God: "I have been endowed with knowledge and with wisdom and with grace, and know that my Lord was offered in sacrifice for me; and I wish to make no sacrifice myself. I have sinned and have not sacrificed my evil passions and worldly inclinations. Come, poor Indians, teach me your simplicity, which is better than my foolish wisdom."

Again he will see a bird calmly and poynously flitting across this mighty chasm looking down fearlessly on the scenes below. It is in its native air; it has wings to soar. Thus the soul that is freed from sin has its wings also. It can look down with serenity upon the wreck of worlds, and in death it is placid in the midst of

see in 15 - July 99 edition of the Catholic Register for another symmetrical allusion. In the Fall as the Drunkard is downward to being likened to one sailing on the water as the storms of evil spirits, and when everything around is in tury and ce'nation. Fall, arises quietly towards its God to rest calmly in His embrace.

The Catholic Church, or to speak more plainly, the sublime religious souls under her influence, always sought the most beautiful and romantic places to erect monasteries and churches to the service of God. Christ Himself retired to the mountain to pray, and He sought the solitude of Thabor to manifest His glory, and Gethsemani to pour forth His sorrows into the bosom of His Father. The soul, withdrawn from the din and the noise and the bustle of this world, breaks from its tension and soars towards God. The Fathers of the desert sought the wilderness and the mountain-caves, there to adore their God. Our forefathers in the faith also peopled the islands in the Atlantic, erecting their monasteries in cliffs overlooking the mighty ocean, where the Monks sat and contemplated God in the fearful storms and in the raging waves that dashed over the rocks; and admired the works of His providence in the flight and screech of the ravens and gulls. In a storm they would imagine souls in distress crying out, "Where is my God." See them also on the islands of the blessed Lough Erne. They beheld the serenity of the sky above and the peaceful waters below, and were led to sweet and calm repose in God. Again, they sought the cliffs of the mountains overlooking the smiling valleys, where they could feast their eyes on the riches and bounties of God in the fertile fields below, and pity busy mortals in their incessant toil after the things that perish. Behold the lilies of the field, the birds of the air. God clothes and provides for all. He fills the soul that is empty of this world.

In Europe there are many sanctuaries, but few in this new world. Niagara will be one, and first of the most famous where God will be adored on the spot in which He manifests Himself in such incomparable majesty and grandeur. The festivals that will be most religiously celebrated in this sanctuary, besides the first-class Festivals of the Church, are the ninth of July, called Our Lady of Miracles or Peace; the sixteenth, Our Lady of Mount Carmel; twenty ninth of September, the Festival of St. Michael; fifteenth of October, St. Teresa; twenty first of November, Presentation of the Blessed Virgin; and the tenth of December, Festival of Our Lady of Loretto.

We exhort you then, beloved brethren, to contribute according to your means to this noble work, and, if possible, organize a pilgrimage to this retreat, accompanied with a few days of retirement, which will add largely to your appreciation of God's works and wonders, and will lead you to greater earnestness in the service of so great and good a Master.

The Peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Communication of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

✠ JOHN JOSEPH LYNCH,

Archbishop of Toronto.

Given at St. Michael's Palace, on the Feast of St. Mark, April 25, 1876.

LETTER of His Grace the Most Rev. J. WALSH, D. D., Archbishop of Toronto, to the Superior of Carmelite Monastery.

Toronto, May 23, 1890.

R. v. A. Kreidt, Prior, Monastery of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Niagara Falls, Ont.;
DEAR FATHER KREIDT:—

I am glad to hear that you intend to begin, as soon as means will allow you, the construction of a house for spiritual retreats at Niagara Falls, in this archdiocese. I sincerely hope that your appeal to a charitable public for the furtherance of this most praiseworthy and meritorious object will meet with the success it so eminently deserves. A Retreat House, conducted by your garden fathers, could not fail to do much good for the salvation and sanctification of souls, especially in a place and amid surroundings where nature itself invites to solemn thought and serious reflections, and where, in very deed, one hears: "The voice of the Lord upon the waters, the God of majesty hath thundered: the Lord upon many waters." (Psalm xxviii.)

Wishing your pious undertaking the divine blessing and a happy issue,

I am, dear Father Kreidt,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

✠ JOHN WALSH,

Archbishop of Toronto.

THE DEANERY, St. Catharines, May 30th, 1890.

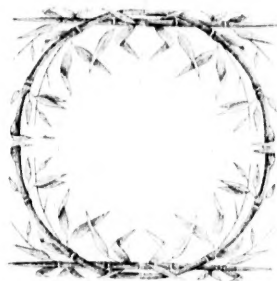
My Dear Father Kreidt:

Do me the kindness to accept the enclosed \$50 as my first subscription towards the great and good work you have entered upon. The Retreat House you propose to build will be a blessing to the Dominion, and cannot fail to meet with the approbation and encouragement of all who are interested in the salvation of souls.

Wishing you every success, I remain, my dear Father Kreidt,

Very faithfully yours,

W. B. HAERIS, Dean.



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